

**REMARKS**

Applicants have canceled original claims 1-4 and have added new claims 5-17 to the application to more particularly define the invention. Applicants retain all right to file a continuation or divisional application on any canceled subject matter at a later time during the prosecution of this application.

Applicants are submitting herewith a copy of the Search Report which issued on International Application No. PCT/NO99/00299, of which the present application is the U.S. national phase. All of the publications cited in the International Search Report are listed on the attached Form PTO-1449. It is Applicants' understanding that, under the procedures of the PCT, copies of the cited publications will have been supplied to the U.S. Patent Office by the International Bureau. However, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney if additional copies are necessary or would facilitate examination of the present application.

Otherwise, the Examiner is respectfully requested to return an initialed and dated copy of the attached Form PTO-1449 to confirm that all publications listed thereon have been considered and made officially of record in the file of this application.

Applicants understand that, under the procedures of the PCT, a copy of the priority document (NO 19984560, filed 30 September 1998) will have been supplied to the U.S. Patent Office pursuant to Rule 17 of the PCT Regulations. It is therefore respectfully requested that the first Official Action in the present application contain an indication that the appropriate priority document is in the file of this application.

In view of the above amendments, an early action on the application is now in order and is most respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,  
BACON & THOMAS, PLLC

By: Richard E. Fichter  
Richard E. Fichter  
Registration No. 26,382

625 Slaters Lane - 4th Floor  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314  
Phone: (703) 683-0500  
Facsimile: (703) 683-1080  
REF:kdd  
PA01.wpd  
DATE: March 29, 2001